

Minutes of the LINK Annual General Meeting

6.00 p.m. Tuesday 6th July 2010

Copthorne Hotel, Plymouth

Speakers: Chris Boote (Chair of Stewardship Group), Claire Hendy (LINK Host Team Communication & Liaison Officer), Gennifer Gomez (LINK Stewardship Group/Ambassador), Geoff Marks (LINK Stewardship Group), Dot Throssell (LINK Stewardship Group), Barry Lucas (Vice Chair, LINK Stewardship Group), Vicky Shipway (LINK Host Team Manager), Althea Morgan (LINK Stewardship Group).

- 6.00 Chris Boote opened the proceedings by welcoming everyone and thanking the attendees for coming. He ran through the agenda, explaining that various members of the Stewardship Group would be giving different insights into the work of the LINK during the past year. He also thanked the representatives of the various service providers we work with for having welcomed working with the LINK, the Host Team for the support they have provided, and the general LINK membership, without which the LINK would not exist. He requested that any questions be kept until the end of the meeting.
- 6.05 Claire Hendy introduced the LINK, explaining its origins and the function of Visiting Team and volunteers.
- 6.10 Gennifer Gomez described her reasons for becoming involved in the LINK, and then told the audience about the events and activities that the LINK had been involved with during the year. She explained her conviction that the main strength of the LINK is in listening to and encouraging people to become involved, either through feedback or as volunteers. She illustrated this by describing a recent event involving gypsy and traveller groups which was very successful in obtaining their views on various issues; previous attempts to access this group by other organisations had been unsuccessful. She also spoke about the success of the LINK website during the year, informing the audience of the number of hits received from other countries, and describing the translation facility on the website and the Browse Aloud feature, which reads the text for those unable to read the web pages. Browse Aloud has been accessed twenty times during the past year. The website has been a success, with feedback received showing that people find the site interesting and informative.
- 6.20 Geoff Marks explained that his reason for joining the LINK was to highlight issues for people with learning disabilities/mental health service users. He discussed how the LINK interacts with health and social care providers, and his involvement with the hospital to increase the provision there for learning disability services. He spoke of the quarterly Issues meetings held by the Stewardship Group, and explained that this is where issues are analysed and prioritised for the LINK. He stressed the importance of the LINK as providing a voice for Plymouth people.
- 6.25 Chris Boote then spoke about the partnerships that the LINK has forged and strengthened during the year. He thanked the health and social care services for their

progressive attitude in accepting the LINK, and then explained the structures of the various bodies responsible for providing health care services for Plymouth. He informed the audience that LINK has seventeen seats on various bodies around the city, and stressed the influence this gives the LINK membership to have their views represented, and ultimately influence decisions made. He stressed the fact that the LINK tries to understand the current services and how they operate, and works to bring improvement on specific issues; he used the example of additions being made to the hospital's 'Attending Clinics' booklet, which increased patient information about parking issues to highlight LINK success in this area. Chris also explained the function of the Care Quality Commission as a regulator for health services, and the assistance LINK is able to provide it at a national level to assist in monitoring, by making sure that local views are represented. He also spoke about joint local initiatives between the LINK and service providers, such as the collaboration with NHS Plymouth to stage an event in October called 'Healthy Plymouth', which will give NHS Plymouth a chance to interact with the public.

Chris then described some examples of the LINK successes during the past year, such as assisting in the monitoring of discharge from hospital to care homes through the use of a checklist to identify areas needing improvement, and the GP Question Time event, which allowed local people to question and give their views on services to the people responsible for providing those services.

- 6.35 Dot Throssell explained that she became involved with the LINK because it felt a positive way to interact with health and social care services, and work together to improve some areas of the service. As a carer herself, Dot has a great interest in this service, and LINK feedback has identified several areas of concern to carers. These areas include: carers' not being identified and referred to support services, a feeling of not being taken seriously, even when they are caring for the person concerned, and how is money allocated for carers' services being spent? Dot described the meeting with service providers which she and Vicky Shipway from the Host Team had attended, and the positive outcome which had come from it. Further meetings will be taking place in the near future to decide how to prioritise and work on those areas flagged for improvement. Dot and the Host Team are to identify and prioritise the feedback LINK has received and take to the next meeting to assist the commissioners in deciding which areas to deal with first.
- 6.40 Barry Lucas spoke about the priorities of the LINK, and explained that these were set from public feedback. Using the LINK priorities diagram, Barry explained LINK involvement in the areas of learning disabilities, proposals to locate gynaecological cancer surgery to Truro, the prospect of Plymouth becoming a regional burns centre, GP's services, dental services, hospital discharge, carers' services, mental health services, direct payments and care homes. After giving a brief overview of LINK activity, he referred the audience to the annual report for more details.
- 6.50 Vicky Shipway then talked about the responsibilities of the LINK to work for the improvement of health and social care services. She explained the statutory duty that

service providers have to co-operate with the LINK, but emphasised that most LINK successes have been due to willing participation by health and social care services, and that Plymouth LINK has generated a very positive relationship with all of our health and social care providers, who have been very responsive to the feedback provided by LINK. Vicky explained the function of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to investigate health and social care provision, but stressed that no cases had been referred to them to date. Vicky ended by informing the audience that health and social care providers have requested that LINK visit to inspect services and provide feedback as a tool to assist them in improving services.

- 6.55 Vicky Shipway then moved on to the LINK budget, and talked through the areas of expenditure. Training costs and volunteer expenses have increased this year due to the increase in volunteers and more intensive training of the Stewardship Group to fulfil their role; both internal and external trainers have been used. On the other hand, translation costs have fallen as we are able to reprint leaflets which we had prepared last year, and also many items have been translated by volunteers at no charge. Media costs include advertising on buses, the quarterly bulletins and the website. Development and innovation costs have been accumulated through prize draws for people for completing surveys, providing a meeting space for volunteers, and community outreach. Due to the increase in membership, printing and postal costs have also increased this year. The budget for events and outreach has been spent in consultations, and public events. Overall, this activity has left the LINK with a small under spend, which will be carried forward to year three.
- 6.55 Althea Morgan then spoke about her reasons for joining the LINK, and of what the LINK plans to do in the following year; she joined to represent the diverse communities of Plymouth, and looks forward to next year being as exciting as this one has been. She explained that the Stewardship Group had recently met to decide their strategy for the coming year regarding promotion, membership and representation on committees, and how to build on the successes achieved by LINK so far. Althea then publicised the upcoming Celebration event on 17th July and the 'Healthy Plymouth' event on 9th October. The LINK Stewardship Group has decided to do more community based work, increase membership, build on events that give the public direct contact with service providers, such as our Question Time event, and continue to give local feedback to services and then report back to the public on what has changed as a result.
- 7.00 Chris Boote then thanked the Stewardship Group for their input to the success of the evening, and asked if there were any questions. As there were no questions raised, the meeting was declared closed.